

SUMMARY OF STANFORD RESEARCH POLICIES APPLICABLE TO  
THE WHITEHEAD INSTITUTE

Publication

Sponsored research cannot be conducted at Stanford unless (i) the University can disclose the identity of the sponsor and the investigator, the nature of the research inquiry, and the approximate dollar value of the agreement; (ii) the data are available to all members of the research study group; and (iii) that the results are freely publishable. The policy allows some exceptions to protect personal privacy, background data considered confidential by the sponsor which is not central to the nature of the inquiry, and for brief delays in publication to protect those and to allow for development of invention disclosures to protect patentable inventions. The detailed policy is available on request.

Much of the incentive for the University engaging in sponsored research lies in the opportunity to contribute to the store of knowledge. As graduate students are often centrally involved in the work itself and derive thesis and dissertation material from the projects which must be freely publishable in order for them to obtain their degrees, the University requires freedom to publish the results of the work and to do so promptly, subject only to (1) a brief sponsor prior review and (2) the option by the sponsor to receive credit for supporting the work in the publication itself. The prior review period is allowed to avoid inadvertent compromise of either any sponsor-furnished confidential background information, or of an idea which the individual, the University, or the sponsor may wish to protect under copyright or patent law.

At bottom, the policy is designed specifically to inform the application of the principle that intellectual inquiry conducted in a research university environment must be sui generis free, open, and the ideas and hypotheses subject to debate for the work to be of quality and to insure the vigor of the educational enterprise with which academic research is tightly interwoven.

Environment

Both as a matter of Stanford's own policy and also adhering to Federal and State law and regulation, research programs and projects at Stanford are subject to compliance with policies and procedures designed to provide a safe and healthy environment. Additionally, research proposals which involve work with human research subjects, laboratory animals, or use of biohazardous materials (e.g., radiation, recombinant DNA, chemical carcinogens) are subject to prior review by appropriate panels of experts to minimize the risk of adverse consequences.

In connection with the use of human subjects in research, the review of individual projects is focussed on risk minimization. Our concerns are with the protection of the individual (especially those for whom there is some real degree of experimental risk); addressing the great public sensitivity to the potential for abuse which tends to focus on the organization as a whole rather than on specific occurrence and its degree of uniqueness; meeting governmental review requirements; ensuring experiments are conducted in proper facilities; and the need to calibrate and manage the degree of fiscal exposure.

For the same set of reasons, we have similar processes to address these concerns in the other areas noted. In research involving animals, radiation, recombinant DNA, and chemical carcinogen use, the issues are the same, but with the additional requirement to ensure proper disposal of wastes. We also have a small health and safety staff whose responsibilities include monitoring and advising on the more conventional industrial hygiene and plant safety issues.

Taken together, this network of policy and process is designed to protect those involved with the actual research projects, assure an informed balance of risk against experimental need, and to protect the institution and the larger community.

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